

Message Text

SECRET

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51

ACTION AF-04

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 INR-05 CIAE-00

SP-02 L-01 SCCT-01 PM-03 DODE-00 /036 W

----- 075954

R 071156Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5244

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

MOGADISCIO 3790

NAIROBI 6693

S E C R E T ADDIS ABABA 8034

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINT PINS ET

SUBJ: MORE CORRESPONDENCE FROM BIRU BROTHERS

REF: ADDIS 5174 AND PREVIOUS

1. EMBASSY IS IN RECEIPT OF NEW 3-PAGE SINGLE-SPACED HANDWRITTEN LETTER IN GOOD ENGLISH SIGNED BY LIJ. MERID BIRU AND LIJ. MESFIN BIRU. THE DEPARTMENT WILL RECALL THAT THE BIRU BROTHERS ARE LEADING A RELATIVELY SIGNIFICANT INSURGENCY IN THE MENZ AREA OF NORTHERN SHOA. THE MISSIONARIES WHO DELIVERED THIS LETTER AT THE CHANCERY SENT ALONG A NOTE IN WHICH THEY STATE THAT THE CONDITIONS IN NORTHERN SHOA HAVE REMAINED ESSENTIALLY UNCHANGED SINCE THE OUT BREAK OF DISSIDENCE THERE. A SUMMARY OF THE BIRU BROTHERS JUNE 24 LETTER FOLLOWS.

2. THE LETTER BEGINS WITH THE STATEMENT THAT IT IS BEING WRITTEN ON THE OCCASION OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY NATHANIEL DAVIS' FORTHCOMING VISIT "DURING WHICH THE EPMG MAY REQUEST MILITARY HARDWARE AND AMMUNITION FROM THE USG." THE LETTER RECALLS THE WRITERS' EXPRESSION OF THEIR DISPLEASURE WITH THE STATE

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DEPARTMENT'S RECENT ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE SALE OF \$8 MILLION

DOLLARS' WORTH OF ARMS TO ETHIOPIA" (SIC) WHICH WILL HELP THE EPMG TO MASSACRE TENS OF THOUSANDS OF CIVILIANS IN ITS BRUTAL SUPPRESSION OF FREEDOM AND THE RULE OF LAW.

3. THE LETTER THEN SUMMARIZES THE SITUATION IN ETHIOPIA IN TERMS OF A CIVIL WAR BETWEEN THE GOE AND THE PEOPLE, WITH THE FORMER TRYING TO "INTRODUCE COMMUNISM AND DICTATORSHIP" INTO THE COUNTRY WHEREAS THE LATTER ARE RESISTING.

4. THE LETTER GOES ON TO SAY THAT SOUTHERN ETHIOPIA IS IN THE GRIP OF STARVATION CAUSED BY DROUGHT. IT ASSERTS THAT "DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN AID TO RELIEVE THE SITUATION" IS BEING DIVERTED TO SUSTAIN AND WAGE A CIVIL WAR AGAINST THE PEOPLE IN ALL THE PROVINCES OF THE COUNTRY. THE LETTER NOTES THAT ACCORDING TO THE BBC THE EPMG IS PRESENTLY DEPLOYING TWO-THIRDS OF THE ARMY IN ERITREA IN ITS BATTLE AGAINST CIVILAINS AT A COST OF ONE-HALF-MILLION US DOLLARS A DAY. IT CITES THIS AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE EXTRAVAGANT SPENDING IN WHICH THE GOVERNMENT IS INDULGING DURING A TIME OF MASS STARVATION THROUGHOUT MUCH OF THE COUNTRY. THE WRITERS DRAW THE CONCLUSION THAT "AT THE MOST" AID FOR THE STARVING PEOPLE OF ETHIOPIA MUST BE SUPERVISED BY THE DONORS TO MAKE SURE IT IS NOT DIVERTED TO MILITARY PURPOSES.

5. THE LETTER THEN ASSERTS THAT ETHIOPIA'S PEOPLE ARE GRADUALLY BECOMING AWARE THAT WHAT IS BEING INTRODUCED INTO ETHIOPIA IN THE NAME OF REFORM AND SOCIALISM IS ACTUALLY THE ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMUNISM AND DICTATORSHIP. ACCORDINGLY, RESISTANCE IS BREAKING OUT "IN ALL THE PROVINCES OF ETHIOPIA." MILITARY EFFORTS TO CRUSH THIS RESISTANCE, THE WRITERS SAY, HAVE PROVED INSUFFICIENT. HOWEVER, "THE MILITARY WILL FIGHT TO THE LAST KNOWING TOO WELL THAT IT WILL BE HELD COLLECTIVELY ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE DEATH AND IMPRISONMENT THAT IT HAS INFLICTED ON INNOCENT CITIZENS...."

6. THE LETTER THEN SAYS THAT SECONDARY EDUCATION IS AT A COMPLETE STANDSTILL THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY WHERE "THOUSANDS OF STUDENTS ARE UNDER ARREST AND THOUSANDS MORE HAVE BEEN KILLED" FOR THEIR REFUSAL TO ATTEND SCHOOLS IN A STRIKE FOR THE RETURN OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT. STUDENTS, THE LETTER CONTINUES,
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ARE THUS BEING WHIPSAWED BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PEASANTS WHO ARE ALSO RESISTING DICTATORSHIP.

7. THE TREAT OF "SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES" ON ALL ROADS LEADING TO AND FROM ADDIS ABABA, PARTICULARLY THOSE LINKING THE CAPITAL TO THE PORTS, IS THEN REAISED. IT IS STRANGLING ADDIS. "WHATEVER LITTLE MOVEMENT THERE IS MUST BE UNDER MILITARY SUPERVISION."

8. THE LETTER CLOSES WITH THE EXPRESSION OF THE WRITERS' CONVICTION THAT ALTHOUGH THE PEOPLE ARE ILL-ARMED AND ARE FACING FORMIDABLE MILITARY FORCES THEY WILL PREVAIL AND ESTABLISH A FREE SOCIETY. THE BIRUS WARN THAT IF THE US SHOULD AID THE EPMG IN ESTABLISHING DICTATORSHIP, IT WILL SOW THE SEEDS OF HATRED FOR THE WEST AND PARTICULARLY FOR ITSELF. HOWEVER, IF THE US SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THE PEOPLE'S STRUGGLE "NOT NECESSARILY FOR THE REESTABLISHMENT OF THE MONARCHY BUT FOR FREEDON, INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS, AND THE RULE OF LAW, THE ETHIOPIAN PEOPLE WILL ONLY RENEW THEIR LONG-STANDING AFFECTION FOR AMERICANS."

9. COPY OF LETTER BEING POUCHED TO DEPARTMENT.
COMMENT: AS DEPARTMENT AWARE, LETTER MANAGES TO EXAGGERATE ETHIOPIA'S ADMITTEDLY FORMIDABLE PROBLEMS. IT IS, HOWEVER, CAREFULLY DRAFTED BY WELL-INFORMED PEOPLE TO INTEREST OFFICIAL AMERICAN READERS. IT OF COURSE POSSIBLE THAT BIRUS' HOPES FOR EARLY DIRG DEMISE COLOR THEIR PERCEPTION OF ETHIOPIAN ENVIRONMENT.
HUMMEL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: GOVERNMENT OVERTHROW, DISSIDENT FACTIONS, ATROCITIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 JUL 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: KelleyW0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975ADDIS08034
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750234-0116
From: ADDIS ABABA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750779/aaaacsjd.tel
Line Count: 136
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: 75 ADDIS 5174
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: KelleyW0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 25 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <25 AUG 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <15 DEC 2003 by KelleyW0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MORE CORRESPONDENCE FROM BIRU BROTHERS
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PINS, ET, (BIRU, TADESSE)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006